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ABSTRACT

In December 1976 a marketing process was implemented at Prince George's Community College (Maryland) as part of an institutional response to external forces--such as new emphases on life-long learning and equal opportunity, and declining fiscal support--and internal forces, including changing student demographics, enrollments and interests, and changing institutional governance patterns. The marketing process provides a conceptual framework for facilitating a college-wide attitude of responsiveness to student needs and the technology to systematically order those responses. A Task Force, chaired by the Dean of Student Affairs and including respresentatives from the faculty, administration and student body, developed a four-stage process involving service, promotion, delivery and evaluation. The service stage involved identifying "target markets," defined by type of contact with the college, and assessing their unique needs for services and programs. The promotion stage consisted of creating information dissemination strategies designed for specific target groups. The delivery stage addressed the problem of between- and within-term attrition and developed learning, support, and outreach strategies to extend the student body and reduce attrition. The evaluation process reviewed all strategies, identified areas needing improvement and assessed the impact on enrollment. (TR) the impact on enrollment. (TR)

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MARKETING: A STRATEGY FOR INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL

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Paper Presented at the National Convention

of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges

Atlanta, Georgia April 10, 1978

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JC 780 337

CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

Projections for the future of higher education suggest that many of the traditional relationships between colleges and their publics may change dramatically. The following examples of both external and internal environmental forces will require new institutional response systems.

External Forces

A prevailing theme suggested by futurists predicts an increasing emphasis on life-long learning. The combined impact of increasing affluence, more leisure time, and occupational obsolescence resulting from new technologies supports this prediction. By 1985, 5,000 new occupations, currently not recognized, will be created, and within 10 years one in three workers will be employed at jobs that do not exist today.[1] Evidence of this impact of life-long learning appears to be confirmed by a recent study in the State of Illinois which reported that one out of every three adults had taken some kind of course in the past two years.[2]

Equality of opportunity is not only a major concern in our society, but one of the basic premises underlying the "Open Door" concept of the community college. Howard Bowen observes that, "Virtually every group that has endured inferiority of social position is now pressing for equality - workers, farmers, racial and ethnic groups, women, the poor, the handicapped, teenagers, the elderly, homosexuals, drug users, convicts and many others."[3]

Governmental intervention in the management of educational institutions appears to be on the increase. A long list of legislative and regulatory programs including Affirmative Action, Title IX, Minimum Standards of Progress, Student Consumer Information Requirements, and the recent Handicapped Acts are requiring changes in

resource allocations, institutional procedures, instructional practices and facilities construction.

The shrinking public fiscal support for higher education at all levels is making it increasingly difficult for colleges and universities to respond to demands for service. With inflation escalating educational costs, more of the financial burden is being transferred to student consumers.

Internal Forces

Changing student demographics are exerting a new force on the internal environment of colleges. These "New Students" described by Patricia Cross[4] include rising numbers of those who are older, minority, female, financially and educationally disadvantaged and enrolled on a part-time basis.

From a fiscal perspective, the stabilization of, or in some cases decline in, student enrollments has had a dramatic effect on colleges. Fall semester 1976 national enrollments in two-year colleges fell below those of the previous year, and the net increase from 1975 to 1977 represents a growth of only 3% for the two-year period. A decrease of 23.8% in high school graduates is forecast between 1977 and 1990.

Changing student interests are having a significant impact on curriculum and the distribution of college resources. The waning interest in languages, geography and philosophy and the burgeoning demand for business studies are forcing institutions to re-allocate resources.

Changing patterns of institutional governance have given students a greater voice in the management of colleges. Student membership on committees, senates and Boards of Trustees are evidence of the formal recognition of student concerns. The advent of collective bargaining in higher education has polarized internal relationships within colleges and impeded the potential for responsiveness to changing demands.

THE MARKETING PERSPECTIVE

Since the sixties, public educators have given little systematic attention to external and internal environmental forces impacting on colleges. Moreover, most of the leadership in higher education, including the community college, follows a traditional model of educational planning which includes the following components: (1) enrollment projections; (2) budgets; and (3) facilities/space planning and development. This model and its adaptations may not consider the changing needs and interests of individuals, agencies and institutions within the community nor the responsibility of the college to respond to these needs.

As college enrollments begin to stabilize or decline, it is easy to become entrapped in a negative mentality which focuses on reduction in force policies, budget deficits and program reductions. The discipline of MARKETING, applied to higher education, offers a positive alternative which has the potential for increasing enrollments, reducing attrition and making college services more responsive to the needs of student consumers.

Some educators may cringe at the use of the term "marketer" and raise ethical questions about the appropriateness of spending public resources to increase consumption of services and thereby create additional demands for public support. Moreover, marketing is negatively associated with "hard sell" in the minds of many professionals. This attitude is contradictory to much of the current emphasis upon consumerism and the responsibility of public agencies to provide better information upon which to make informed choices.

Product Orientation

Many reservations about marketing are the legacy of outdated orientations that have been discarded by the profit sector. The "product orientation," that has historically characterized higher education, assumes that the purposes of the college are self-validating and that a sufficient number of students will buy. This supermarket approach offers a limited number of sections of English 101, Math 105 and Speech 101. When these have been sold the student must wait until the next term when more inventory becomes available.

Sales Orientation

In the early seventies, as enrollments began to stabilize, many colleges adopted a "sales orientation" wherein they aggressively promoted the traditional products (courses and programs) with little or no attention given to the needs and wishes of prospective students. Some colleges hired professional recruiters who worked on a commission basis, and many faculty members hawked their favorite courses in the registration process.

Marketing Orientation

The emerging "marketing orientation" stresses identification of consumers' needs, the development of a systematic plan for meeting those needs and the assessment of customer satisfaction as a measure of the organization's effectiveness. In this context, the marketing concept is totally consistent with the philosophical commitment of the community college to be responsive to the needs of the communities which it serves.

The discipline of marketing offers more than a new set of labels for traditional

management functions. It suggests not only an attitude of responsiveness but a systematic technology for ordering responses. Philip Kotler[5] argues that the critical issue is not one of whether or not to become involved in marketing, but rather, how reasoned the process should be.

Peter Drucker states that, "The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well that ... service fits him and sells itself."[6]

In this context the concept of marketing becomes not just a cookbook of promotional or delivery strategies but rather a perspective which permeates every aspect of the college. It is a way of thinking about one's individual responsibilities in responding first to the needs and wishes of the student consumer and, secondly, to the needs of the institution. Broadly defined this means that every college employee is a marketer for the institution.

THE MARKETING PROCESS

The following case study[7] will illustrate one college's experience in implementing a "marketing process" and demonstrate the effectiveness of that process as a strategy for institutional renewal.

Prince George's Community College, located in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C., serves a county population of more than 700,000. The present enrollment of 20,000 includes 13,700 credit and 6,300 community services students, or approximately 9,000 full-time equivalent students.

At the conclusion of the advance registration for Spring, 1977, there were indicators that the College might not meet budgeted enrollment projections. Both the previous

Summer sessions and Fall enrollments had been somewhat below projections. In the words of the Director of Institutional Research, "The enrollment was increasing at a decreasing rate."

In December, 1976, an ad hoc group of approximately 20 persons representing areas of the College that have responsibility for contacting prospective students was convened to examine college-wide outreach efforts. The brainstorming ideas suggested by this group were organized according to priorities and shared with the administration.

A Task Force, chaired by the Dean of Student Affairs, was commissioned to develop marketing strategies for the College. It included representation from: arts and sciences, technical and career education and evening and community education faculty; student affairs, community information, college publications, and the student governance board. The Task Force developed a four-stage marketing process: service, promotion, delivery and evaluation.

Service Stage

The SERVICE stage involves the identification of what services and/or programs are provided for whom. The discovery and description of "market segments" resulted in the identification of new "target markets" and the assessment of unique needs of these sub-populations of potential students.

Service Indices

An examination of service needs revealed that, although Prince George's Community College serves about 34 percent of all college-bound high school graduates in its county,

the previous year's service index of 1.63 percent of residents enrolled in credit courses was below that of the community colleges in adjacent counties. The 1970 census data indicated that the median number of school years completed for males 25 years and older is 12.6 for Prince George's County and 15.0 for a neighboring county.[8] The Task Force observed that more intensive efforts were needed to acquaint Prince George's citizens with postsecondary opportunities.

Enrollment trends were reviewed and compared with enrollment forecasts to determine if there were changing patterns in overall service indices. Consistent with national patterns, it was noted that the average credit load per student had declined steadily from 9.3 hours in 1973 to 8.2 hours in 1977.

Changing Student Profile

There had been a dramatic change in the profile of the student body at Prince George's Community College during the past five years.[9] Not only had the percentage of students under 21 years of age decreased from 43% to 35%, but the percentage of those 26 years and older had increased from 31% to 41% during the same period. Part-time enrollment, defined as those enrolled for less than 12 semester hours, had increased from 58% to 68% of the student body. One of the most significant changes had been the increase in black students from 18% to 32% in five years. Concurrent with this increase had been an increase from 48% to 57% in the percentage of female students. These changes reflected the increasing demand for learning and support services that were responsive to the needs of a student population that was increasingly older, part-time, minority and female.

Geographical Access

Geographical access to programs was examined. Prince George's County borders the Northeast and Southeast sides of the District of Columbia. The county is approximately 60 miles from north-south and 30 miles from east-west. The main campus is centrally located with one Degree Center in the northern sector and two Degree Centers in the southern sector. An additional 7 extension centers are located throughout the county in schools, churches, fire stations, police stations, office buildings and correctional agencies.

Target Markets

A review of the available service indices and the changing student profile suggested the need to identify market segments or "target markets" for whom the college could develop market strategies. These potential target markets were identified in four categories based on type of contact with the college rather than population demographics:

Prince George's Community College Students

Currently enrolled full-time, part-time credit students

Currently enrolled Community Services (non-credit) students

Previously enrolled credit and non-credit students (alumni)

Families of students

Prospective Customer Initiated Contacts

Persons who write for information

Persons who telephone for information

Persons who visit the College

College Initiated Contacts with Community Adults

- Public library traffic
- Shopping mall traffic
- Bank traffic
- Business employees
- Government agency employees
- Senior citizens
- Homemakers
- Church attenders
- Active military personnel
- Members of service clubs and associations
- Teachers
- Non-teaching school employees
- Nurses
- Apartment managers
- Hotel-motel personnel
- Retired military personnel
- Incarcerated persons
- Adults facing mid-life career change
- Veterans

Public School Students

- High school students
- Junior high school students
- Faculty and counselors
- Parents

Promotion Stage

PROMOTION is often considered to be synonymous with marketing when in fact it is only one stage of the marketing process. In contrast to the traditional "hard sell", greater attention was directed toward providing students with adequate information upon which to make informed choices about educational programs and expected consumer

outcomes for completion of those programs. In addition, promotional activities provided valuable market research data on the effectiveness of current programs and on future program needs.

A variety of marketing strategies were suggested by the Task Force as possible responses to the identified market segments. Some of these strategies required only minor modifications in current operating procedures while others needed college-wide review and involved commitment of additional College resources.

Responsibility for each project was assigned to an administrator together with a completion date and identification of additional funds that were needed for implementation. These strategies were in addition to the regular on-going promotional activities such as visits to high schools, paid advertising, news releases, radio announcements and brochures. Out of a long list of suggested possibilities, the following promotion strategies were approved for implementation.

Target Markets	Strategy	Person Responsible	Completion Date
P.G.C.C. students	Promote credit courses with Community Service students	Dr. Breyer	January 1978
	Centralize all College mailing lists	Dr. Breyer	Fall 1977
Customer initiated Contacts	Staff College information booth in Bladen Hall	Dr. Busky	Fall 1977
	Prepare outdoor directory signs for all College buildings	Mr. Hardwick	Fall 1977
	Offer Communication Skills Workshop for registration and admissions personnel	Mr. Seldomridge	Spring 1977
	Install special telephones for registration information	Mr. Weaver	August 1977

Target Markets	Strategy	Person Responsible	Completion Date
Contacts with Community Adults	Promote College programs with senior citizens	Dr. Florestano	Spring 1978
	Staff information centers in County shopping malls	Mr. Wiley	Summer 1977
	Staff information centers in County libraries	Mr. Wiley	Summer 1977
	Mail fall semester registration brochure to all County residents	Dr. Breyer	August 1977
	Send letter and brochures to all County churches	Mr. Wiley	Spring 1978
	Send letters to all County civic associations	Mr. Wiley	Spring 1977
	Prepare combined class schedule for mailing to all homes in County	Dr. Breyer	November 1977 May 1978
	Prepare general information posters for libraries, banks & businesses	Mr. Wiley	July 1977
	Contact all city mayors in P.G. County	Mr. Wiley	Summer 1977
	Staff information booth at County Fair	Mr. Boucher	August 1977
High School Students	Host College/Career Fair for high school students on campus	Mr. Wiley	Spring 1978
	Prepare slide presentation on College	Mr. Wiley	August 1977
	Schedule divisional and departmental articulation meetings with County school faculty	Dr. Kuhn Dean Wise	Spring 1978
	Send letters to graduating seniors	Mr. Wiley	Summer 1977
	Host luncheon for all County principals	Mr. Boucher	Spring 1977

Delivery Stage

DELIVERY is the key to an effective marketing process that is dependent upon repeat business and customer satisfaction. The best promotional efforts will be ineffective unless the College can deliver learning and support services that students want at times and locations that are convenient for them.

Cope and Hannah report that about two students in ten entering community colleges stay on to complete the requirements for an associate degree and one in ten goes on to complete the requirements for a baccalaureate degree.[10] The failure of such a high percentage of students to meet entrance objectives represents not only a loss of institutional resources but a waste of human resources invested by the unsuccessful students.

There are serious charges in the professional literature that the "Open Door" has become the "Revolving Door". Although there is little agreement as to what constitutes true attrition in an era when "stopping in" and "stopping out" has become an acceptable educational behavior, two specific indices are used to describe the attrition experience at Prince George's Community College.

Between-Term Attrition

The attrition index most clearly affecting credit hours is the number of students not returning from the previous term. This "between-term" attrition for fall-spring has been approximately 34% for the past five years. Spring-fall attrition has been approximately 47% during the same five year period. In actual numbers, this represents approximately 5,400 students not returning spring-fall and 4,100 not returning fall-spring.[11]

Within-Term Attrition

From the perspective of the students, "within-term" attrition represents a more serious problem. This index, as used here, includes all unsuccessfully completed courses within an academic semester. This has been described by Paul Larkin as the "non pass" or "inefficiency" rate. The "inefficiency" rate at Prince George's Community College represents approximately 27% of all courses attempted and has been a constant ratio during the past five years.

These two attrition indices provide a potent catalyst for re-examination, from a marketing perspective, of the selection of programs of study, courses to be offered, the way in which offerings are packaged and presented to students, including time and place, and the types of learning support systems available to students. Many of the delivery strategies which follow are aimed at reducing unwarranted attrition. Astin has observed that

> "While administrators and faculty have traditionally seen recruitment as the principal means to keeping enrollment up, an equally promising approach is to reduce dropout rates...Investing resources to prevent dropping out may be more 'cost effective' than applying the same resources to more vigorous recruitment."[12]

Successful implementation of delivery strategies requires the commitment and creative thinking of the faculty, counselors, advisors and others who are responsible for direct delivery of learning and support services to students. The following list of delivery strategies is representative of the kinds of activities which may make a college more responsive to the needs of student consumers.

Delivery Strategies

Type	Strategy	Person Responsible	Completion Date
Learning	Develop a course in study skills	Dr. Busky Dr. Kuhn	October 1977
	Develop a course in career planning	Dr. Borchard Dean Wise	Fall 1977
	Expand tutorial services to support classroom learning	Dr. Kuhn	Spring 1978
	Revise course syllabi to include expected instructional outcomes	Dr. Kuhn	Spring 1978
	Develop internship program for Arts & Sciences	Dr. Kuhn	Spring 1978
	Offer concurrent enrollment in developmental programs	Dr. Kuhn	Spring 1978
	Increase number of programs available in learning labs	Dr. Kuhn	On going
	Develop alternative instructional modes for more courses	Dr. Kuhn	On going
	Develop communications skills center (summer & weekend program)	Dr. Kuhn	Summer 1978
	Develop a pilot academic skills improvement course for able learners	Dr. Kuhn	Spring 1978
Support	Develop programmed self-directed registration packet	Dr. Busky	October 1977
	Develop audio/visual presentation on registration, general college information & transfer information	Dr. Busky	Summer 1977

Type	Strategy	Person Responsible	Completion Date
Support (con't.)	Identify undecided students	Dr. Busky	Fall 1977
	Implement on-line registration	Mr. Seldomridge Dr. Schwartz	November 1977
	Improve procedures for faculty advisement	Dr. Kuhn Dean Wise	Spring 1978
	Develop improved faculty advisement manual	Dr. Busky	September 1977
	Schedule advisement seminars for faculty	Dr. Busky	October 1977
	Offer diagnostic tests for study skills	Dr. Busky	Fall 1977
	Develop self-accessing slide/tape on study skills	Dr. Busky	September 1977
	Implement third week warning letter for non-attenders	Mr. Seldomridge	Fall 1977
	Implement career development center	Dr. Borchard	Fall 1977
	Develop career planning brochure	Mr. Weaver	Summer 1977
	Develop assessment program for career planning	Dr. Borchard	Fall 1977
	Implement on-line CVIS (computer vocational information service) program	Dr. Borchard Dr. Schwartz	Fall 1977
Outreach	Expand credit offerings in summer sessions	Dr. Florestano	Spring 1978
	Expand day and evening credit courses at Goddard Space Center	Dean Wise Mr. James	Fall 1977

Type	Strategy	Person Responsible	Completion Date
Outreach (con't.)	Expand day and evening credit courses at County Building in Upper Marlboro	Dean Wise Mr. James	Fall 1977
	Conduct needs assessment for more courses at Roosevelt High School	Dean Wise Mr. James	Fall 1977
	Expand day and evening course offerings at Andrews Air Force Base	Dr. Florestano Dr. Kuhn Dean Wise	Fall 1977
	Increase counseling and advising support at Andrews Air Force Base	Dr. Busky	Fall 1977
	Offer credit courses at Friendly High School	Mr. James	Fall 1977

Evaluation Stage

Although EVALUATION is discussed as a separate stage in the marketing process, it was considered as an integral part of each of the other stages. To identify changing service needs, access to institutional research studies, census data, and manpower information was essential.

Promotional Strategies

Assessment components which were designed for promotional strategies included surveying by telephone to measure the effectiveness of home-mailed brochures, cross-checking the names of shopping mall and library contacts with actual enrollees, tabulating the number of telephone responses to brochures, and administering questionnaires asking enrollees how they learned about the College. The following examples illustrate the kinds of data that were useful in evaluating the success of specific promotional strategies.

Strategy	Result
Install special telephones for registration information	Brochures were mailed to all County residents with a special 24-hour telephone number to call for further information about registration. Telephones were staffed for approximately three weeks and 1,290 calls were received. Of those 1,290 persons who called, 122 registered for Fall Semester 1977.
Contact all city mayors	Each mayor in the County was contacted first by letter and then by telephone. Nine evening programs were held from which 30 persons registered for Fall Semester 1977.
Staff information centers in County shopping malls	Information Centers in County shopping malls were staffed Friday night and all day Saturday for 14 weekends. Over 2,000 contacts were made of which 1,336 filled out postcards for further information. Of the 1,336, 110 persons registered for Fall Semester 1977.
Staff information centers in County libraries	A brochure entitled "Four Days in May" was distributed at four County libraries. Teams went to four libraries and made 145 contacts. Of that number, 50 persons registered for Fall Semester 1977.
Send letters and brochures to all County churches	Letters were sent to all churches. Twenty-four churches responded with requests for programs and speakers.

Delivery Strategies

The lack of sophisticated measurement tools for assessing the effectiveness of learning and support services contributes to the difficulty of evaluating program delivery strategies. Moreover, the confounding influence of several delivery strategies on the same learning outcome makes direct cause and effect relationships difficult to measure.

As noted earlier, however, some gross indices such as "between-term" and "within-term" attrition may provide an indication of the effectiveness of delivery systems. Although the within-term attrition at Prince George's Community College did not change appreciably during the Fall Semester, the Spring-Fall attrition dropped from 47% in 1976 to 38% in 1977.[13] This decrease resulted in 1,000 fewer students dropping out between Spring and Fall 1977 than had dropped out between the same terms the previous year.

Impact on Enrollment

How successful has the "Marketing Process" been at Prince George's Community College? While enrollment in community colleges has increased nationally only 3% for the two-year period 1975 to 1977, and enrollment has grown minimally at adjacent community colleges, Prince George's Community College experienced an increase of 15% in student headcount and 12% in credit hours between Fall Semesters 1976 and 1977. The increase continued during the Spring Semester with a growth of 12% in headcount and 7% in credit hours over the previous Spring.

Evaluation of the marketing strategies will continue through March 30, 1979. This will allow for assessment of the impact of these proposals through two fall and two spring semesters. It is anticipated that the feedback from this on-going evaluation process will be useful in modifying some of these strategies, suggesting new strategies, and discontinuing those strategies that are not effective.

STRATEGY FOR INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL

A review of changing external and internal environmental forces in higher education suggests a critical need for new response patterns as colleges interact with their student markets. The double-edged sword of declining enrollments and shrinking fiscal support presents the most ominous threat that colleges have faced since the student riots of the 1960's.

If one accepts the premise that stress can create a climate for acceptance of change, then colleges may be facing a propitious moment of opportunity for institutional change. In this context, marketing can be an effective strategy for institutional renewal. The marketing process can provide a conceptual framework for facilitating a college-wide attitude of responsiveness to the needs of student consumers and the technology to systematically order those responses.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

AUG 4 1978

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES

MARKETING STRATEGIES ACTION TIME LINE

FEBRUARY 10, 1977 -- MARCH 30, 1979

PHASE I - PLANNING

February 10, 1977	April 20, 1977	May 4, 1977	May 18, 1977	June 1, 1977
Charge to Task Force	Review First Draft of Position Paper	Establish Priorities for Strategies	Review Final Draft of Position Paper	Position Paper to President

PHASE II - IMPLEMENTATION

June 15, 1977	July 15, 1977	August 1, 1977	August 15, 1977	September 1, 1977 to June 30, 1978
Assign Responsibility for Developing Action Plans	President and Deans Review Action Plans	Approve Action Plans and Commit Resources	Develop Implementation Schedule	Implement Action Plans

PHASE III - EVALUATION

October 1, 1977 -- March 30, 1979

Rev. 4/20

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